

STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
CONNECTICUT SITING COUNCIL

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MAY 25 2007

CONNECTICUT  
SITING COUNCIL

IN RE:

APPLICATION OF OPTASITE TOWERS LLC  
AND OMNIPOINT COMMUNICATIONS, INC.  
FOR A CERTIFICATE OF ENVIRONMENTAL  
COMPATIBILITY AND PUBLIC NEED FOR  
THE CONSTRUCTION, MAINTENANCE AND  
OPERATION OF A TELECOMMUNICATIONS  
FACILITY AT 651 PADDOCK AVENUE IN  
MERIDEN, CONNECTICUT

DOCKET NO. 329

DATE: May 25, 2007

**PREFILED TESTIMONY OF THOMAS SKOGLUND, AICP**

Q1. Please state your name and position.

A. Thomas Skoglund, Assistant Planning Director for the City of Meriden

Q2. Please state your qualifications.

A: I am a Certified Planner with a Master's Degree in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Colorado at Denver. I have been employed as a Planner for 13 years working in 5 states.

Q. What are your concerns regarding the proposed site at 651 Paddock Avenue, Meriden?

A. Along with the Director of Planning, Mr. Caruso, I have many concerns provided previously and listed below:

1. Disregard for Zoning Regulations

The Meriden Zoning Regulations require only one use on a property. This is important because the Church on which the proposed site is located was approved not only from a use standpoint but also from a site plan standpoint. That is why the Church is located as it is on the property—with large setbacks and the parking is to the rear of the property and with the retention of certain trees—in order to maintain the residential character of the area. The introduction of a second use to the site would normally have to go to the Planning Commission for an amendment to the site plan. The Planning Commission would review site issues, including: location and material of driveways, the types of landscaping, architectural treatment of structures, etc. These would be reviewed and adjusted to be compatible with the neighborhood. Decisions as to the site plan and

relationship to the neighborhood are in the hands of the Planning Commission, a local authority which is charged with a comprehensive view of the entire municipality, notwithstanding the role of the Siting Council.

2. Inland Wetlands Considerations

One of the aspects of the site plan review is the environmental impact of a proposal. On this particular site of the proposed cell phone tower, the Inland Wetlands were a concern during the Planning Commission's review of the Church's site plan. The concern for the Inland Wetlands played an important role in the siting of the Church, in fact, the "gravel" parking lot is there in order to offer some relief to the wetlands recharge area. This is an example of the comprehensive view that is necessary in reviewing a site plan.

3. Characterization of Proposed Site's Wetlands

The applicant's soil scientist determined that wetlands on the proposed site were "not high quality", rather that they were "low-moderate quality". I am not familiar with a ranking of wetlands, nor am I aware that a ranking of the quality of the wetlands is found in the Connecticut General Statutes outlining the protection of those wetlands.

Q. Are there historic structures in the area near 651 Paddock Avenue, Meriden?

A. Contrary to the applicant's statement that there aren't any historical structures in the area, there is one located right on 651 Paddock Ave. The register of historical homes relied upon by the applicant is not the only source of historical places. The City of Meriden's Planning Consultant, currently preparing the city update of the Plan of Conservation and Development, has identified a home known as the "Deacon Rice House", a center chimney cape home built in 1796, located on 651 Paddock Avenue as an historic property. See attached, excerpts from the Plan of Conservation and Development "Community Character and Historic Resources" document.

Q. Please describe, from the City's perspective, the site selection process that took place and the City's and applicants' discussions concerning the prospective sites.

A. When the applicants were informed that there was a need to provide full information for staff and boards to understand their proposal and for them to appear before the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Planning Commission in order for their proposed site application to be reviewed by the appropriate city agencies; the applicants refused.

The applicant's statements and inferences that the City of Meriden rejected its previous sites are erroneous and, in fact, the opposite is true. The City of Meriden never rejected a proposed site. In fact, I suggested City of Meriden sites,



including: Nessing Field, Veteran's Memorial Hospital, Thomas Hooker School/fields, and other siting alternatives. See, Mr. Skoglund's 11/17/06, 12/1/06 and 1/31/07 correspondence to the applicants. The City maintained contact and discussed alternatives. However, when discussing the City owned sites with the City of Meriden, the applicants only presented a "cookie cutter" document that was a purported lease. The document did not include siting details or a financial offer to the City of Meriden, so it was impossible to evaluate without further information. City staff cannot recommend undefined plans.

Typically, land use applicants provide full information and we "hash out" projects on our local agendas with our boards and applicants. Although the applicants long had detailed information they did not provide such information to the City prior to applying to the Siting Council. The applicants were also notified at various times that use of City property would require City Council approval. Applicants cut off discussions with the City of Meriden and instead filed a Siting Council application for the church property, the location of proposed site. They stated that they preferred to bypass our appointed and elected officials.

Q. What are the advantages to the siting alternatives suggested by Mr. Skoglund as compared with the current proposed site?

A. Alternatives suggested (such as a "flag pole" structure at a recreation facility) are more compatible with surrounding land uses. They are further from residences. Most alternatives are at higher elevations and could be located on existing structures (such as tall recreation field light poles) or new structures lower than the applicant's proposal.

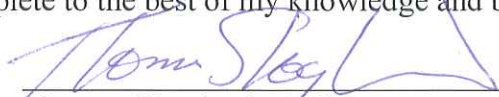
Q. Are there other sites in Meriden that would better suit the applicants' needs?

A. The applicants have stated that there are.

Q. Where are those locations and why are they preferable to the proposed site?

A. The applicants stated that the DOT garage site is preferable and that the Thomas Hooker school/fields site is at least equal to the church site. The DOT site is an industrial type site. Such sites are commonly utilized in other states, and should be considered by the state in cases where the local community supports such an alternative. The site of the former hospital or Nessing Field in conjunction with the DOT site would likely be better for the City and provide increased coverage. **Recommendation and approval of alternatives appears achievable but cannot be fully determined without a more detailed alternative(s).**

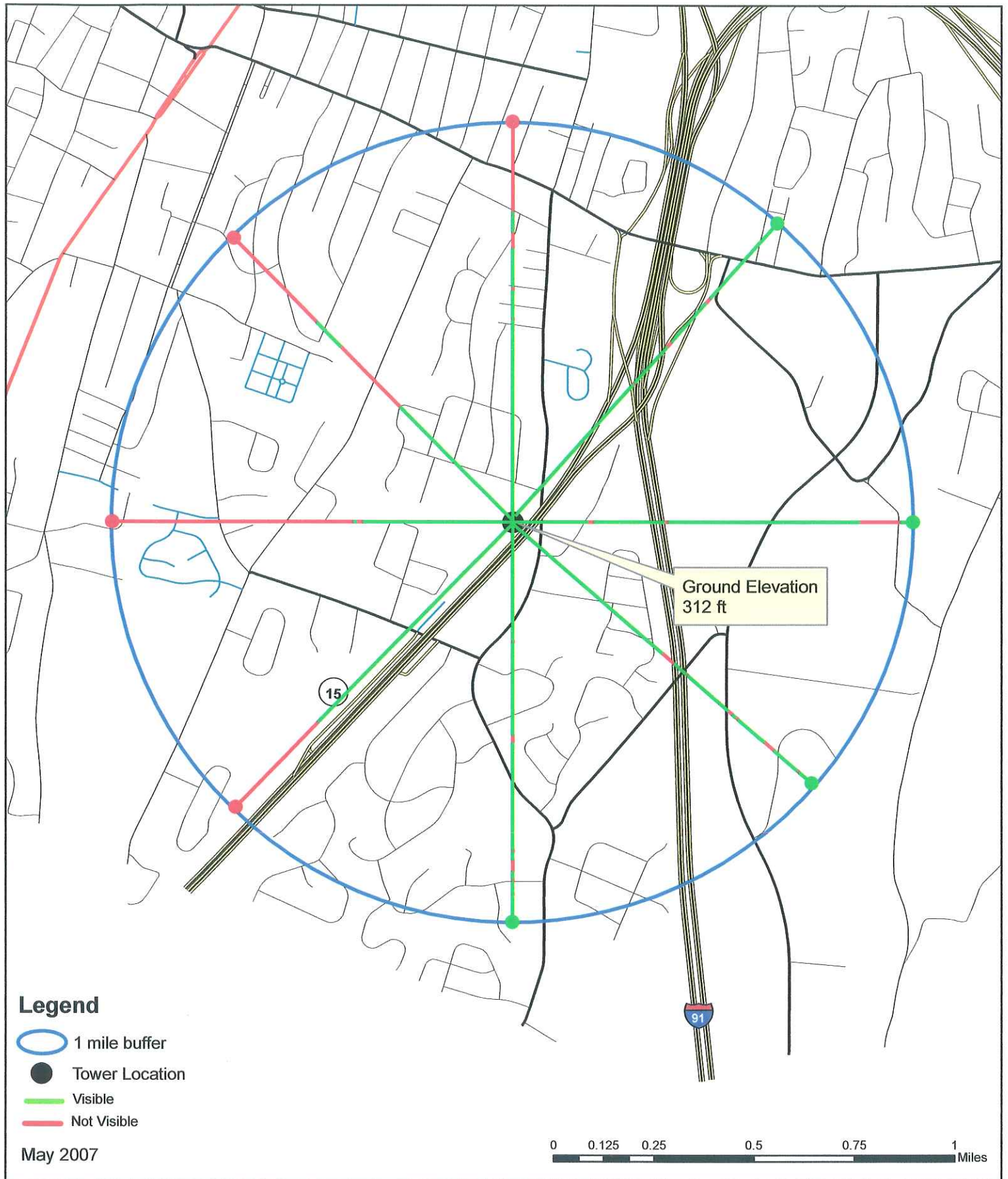
The foregoing statements are true and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief.

  
Thomas Skoglund, AICP

Subscribed and sworn to this 25<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2007

  
Commissioner of Superior Court/  
Notary Public

**PATRICIA L. MICHELSON**  
**NOTARY PUBLIC**  
MY COMMISSION EXPIRES FEB. 28, 2011



## Hooker Elementary School, Meriden, CT

130' flag pole, Line of Site  
No trees or buildings

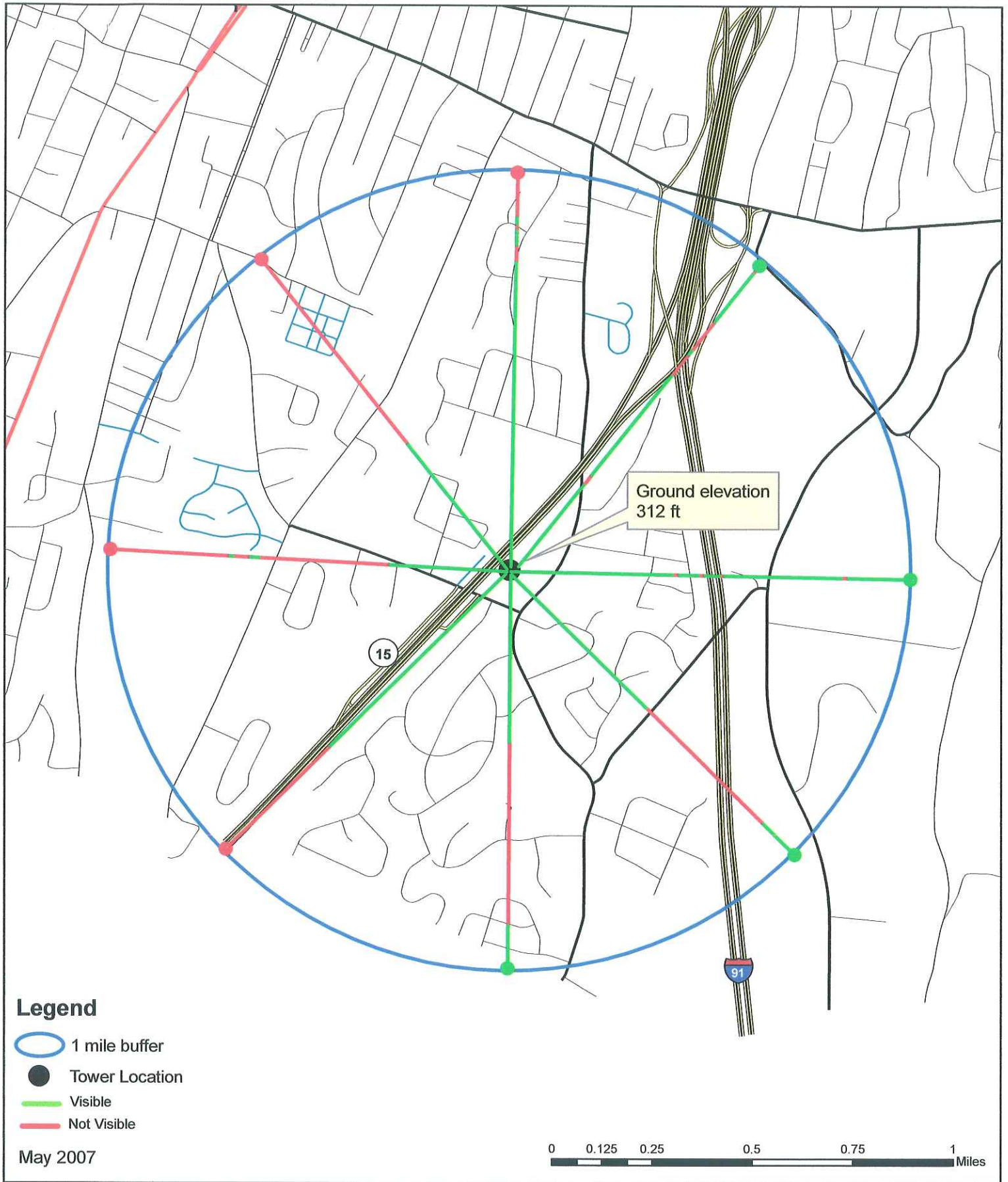


CITY OF MERIDEN  
GIS Services, MIS Department  
142 East Main St, Meriden, CT  
203-630-4148



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651 Paddock Ave, Meriden, CT

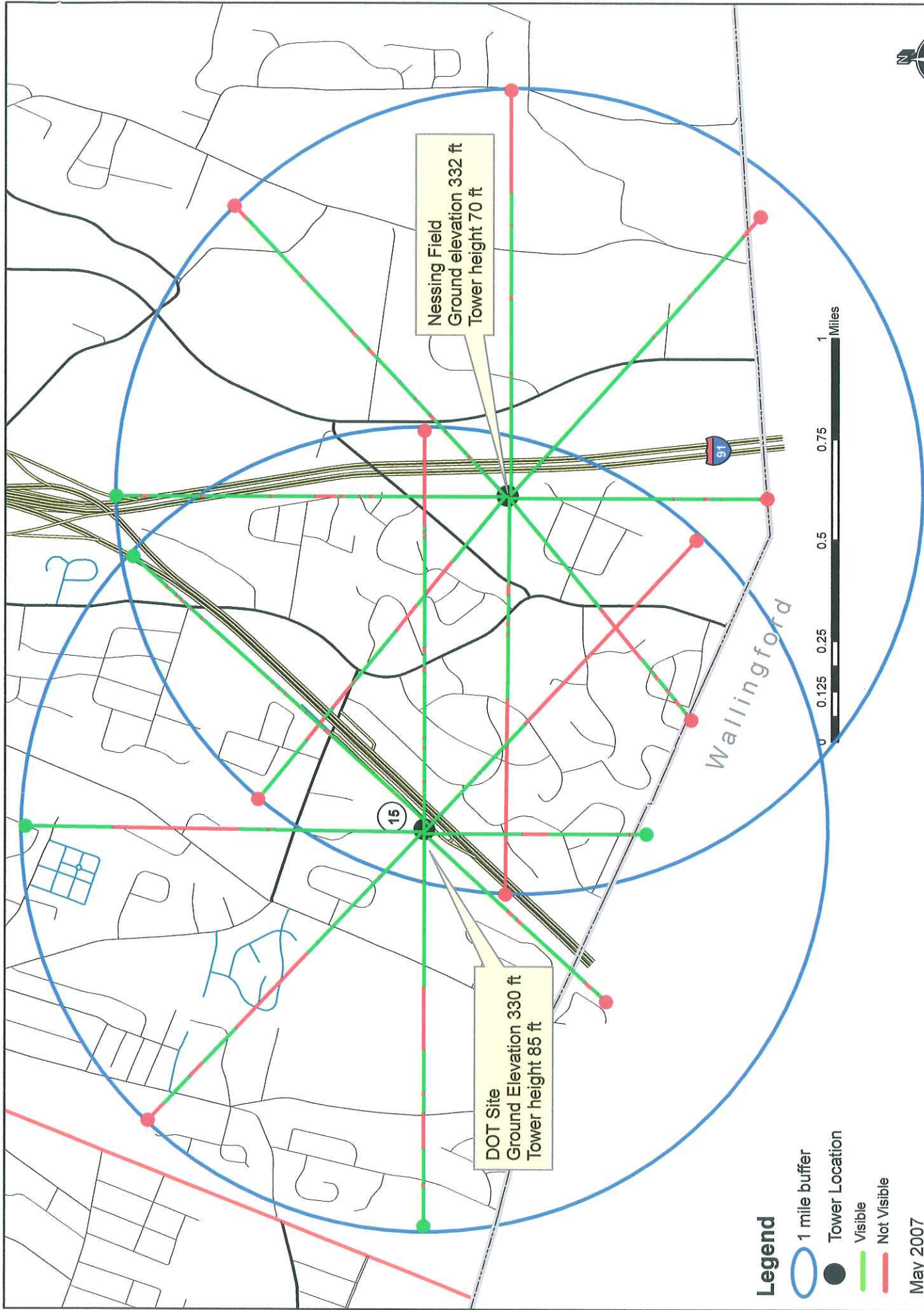
120' tower, Line of Site  
No trees or buildings



CITY OF MERIDEN  
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# Nessing Field, CT DOT Sites, Meriden, CT Line of Site No trees or buildings

